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July 21, 1961

W. W. R. EVALUATION OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FORCES IN VIET-NAM

The battle in Viet-Nam evidently hangs in balance. Positive and negative forces are at work. Since the negative forces will almost certainly increase in weight, it is time to act energetically to increase the strength of the positive forces.

Positive Forces.

These are the positive forces as they can be perceived at this distance.

-- A degree of tactical success achieved by the GVN armed forces; e.g., in suppressing the Viet Cong election offensive; in conducting the delta sweep; in the ambush of July 16; in generally moving over to a more offensive posture.

-- The reassurance of Diem and his government of continued U.S. support, despite events in Laos.

-- The slow beginning of decentralized order in the army and in intelligence collection.

-- The increased international awareness of the aggression being conducted against Diem from Hanoi.

Taken together, these forces have held the line -- but no more -- in recent months.

Negative Forces.

-- The almost certain build-up of Viet Cong forces in recent months, looking towards an expanded offensive.

-- The build-up of the Viet Cong base in Southern Laos, evidently designed to increase the military pressure on Viet-Nam in the months ahead.

-- The continued insecurity of the population and their unwillingness to take the risks of denying food and intelligence to the Viet Cong, and of supplying it to the Viet-Nam cities and Diem's government, respectively.

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-- The threat of rice shortage in the Viet-Nam cities.

-- The persistence of pockets of serious disaffection in the officer corps of Diem's army and the apathy and fatigue of many of his soldiers.

-- Diem's inability to link himself and his government with popular aspirations, including the weakness of his programs of village development and civic action.

-- The lack of a program of positive national goals and purposes: the negative, anti-Communist stance of Diem's political appeal.

W. W. R.

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